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ABSTRACT

The material provides a comprehensive look at the design, goals, and methods to be used in the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment. This assessment will attempt to gauge the civic knowledge and skills of the nation's 4th, 8th, and 12th grade students. To do well on the assessment, students will have to show broad knowledge of the U.S. constitutional system and the workings of civil society. They also will be required to demonstrate a range of intellectual skills; identify and describe important information, as well as, evaluate information and defend positions with appropriate evidence and careful reasoning. The Framework for the 1998 Civics Assessment outlines the components and methodology used in the assessment and discusses the current status of civics and government instruction, as well as past NAEP assessments. The Framework lists five enduring and significant questions that frame the knowledge component of the assessment: (1) What are civic life, politics, and government? (2) What are the foundations of the American political system? (3) How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy? (4) What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs? and (5) What are the roles of citizens in American democracy? The Framework identifies key components of intellectual and participatory skills such as explaining, analyzing, interacting, and monitoring. The guide also describes expected knowledge for each grade level as well as terminology used in the assessment. Various appendices listing goals and corresponding grade levels in tabular formats conclude the document. (MJP)

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Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress

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NAEP Civics Consensus Project

National Assessment Governing Board
U.S. Department of Education

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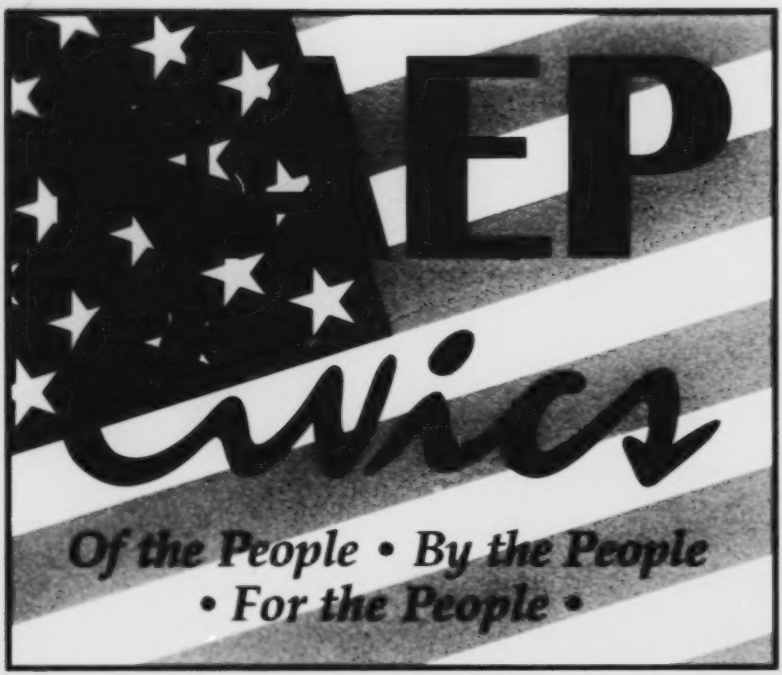

NAEP Civics Consensus Project

Developed under contract number ZA95001001 by the Council of Chief State School Officers with the Center for Civic Education and the American Institutes for Research for the National Assessment Governing Board

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Preface

by the National Assessment Governing Board

As the Constitutional Convention of 1787 drew to a close, Benjamin Franklin was asked what he thought the Convention had produced. "A Republic," he replied. And then he added the cautionary words, "if you can keep it."

Happily, Americans have kept it, so that today the United States has become the only nation in history to maintain a constitutional system of ordered liberty for more than two centuries. But the system and its liberties are not a perpetual-motion machine that can run indefinitely without the attentions of the American people.

In approving this Assessment Framework in civics for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the National Assessment Governing Board was guided by the conviction that the continued success of the world's oldest constitutional democracy depends, in large measure, on the education of our young citizens. In each succeeding generation it is necessary to develop a firm understanding of the core documents of American liberty—the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights—and a reasoned commitment to their values and principles.

It is also necessary, the Board believes, for students to show an understanding not only of American government but also of the workings of civil society—the voluntary associations and non-governmental institutions through which a free people express their civic concerns. The Framework and specifications for the NAEP examination cover both these areas—governmental and non-governmental—of civic life.

The Framework for civics was developed through a national consensus process led by this Board and conducted under contract by the Council of Chief State School Officers in conjunction with the Center for Civic Education and the American Institutes for Research. The consensus committees were broad-based groups of scholars, state and local educators, civic leaders, and interested members of the public. In addition, comments were received from hundreds of others, including parents and public officials.

The Assessment Framework draws heavily on the voluntary *National Standards for Civics and Government*, published in 1994 by the Center for Civic Education. However, the NAEP civics assessment is not only a test of those content standards. Rather, it is intended to show students' civic knowledge and skills in terms of a set of achievement levels, defining basic, proficient, and advanced performance for each grade tested. Preliminary descriptions of the achievement levels are part of the Civics Framework and will be an important consideration in constructing the NAEP civics exam and reporting its results.

Like all NAEP assessments, this is a test of knowledge and skills, not of behavior or convictions. Although the consensus committees preparing the Framework were rightly concerned with the importance of civic dispositions, the test exercises will deal strictly with student knowledge of those dispositions and explanations of their importance. The assessment will not include questions related to students' personal values or dispositions. Also, any direct measurement of participatory skills, such as participating in student government or attending public meetings, is beyond the scope of the assessment.

To do well on this assessment, students will have to show broad knowledge of the American constitutional system and of the workings of our civil society. They will also be required to demonstrate a range of intellectual skills—identifying and describing important information, explaining and analyzing it, and evaluating information and defending positions with appropriate evidence and careful reasoning.

As Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out, each new generation is a new people that must acquire the knowledge, learn the skills, and develop the dispositions in order to maintain and improve a constitutional democracy. The National Assessment in civics, scheduled for 1998 in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades, is designed to show how well American students are being prepared for citizenship in our constitutional democracy.

The National Assessment Governing Board hopes its results will be used to improve civic education for all of America's children and to help make sure that our republic, established near the end of the 18th century, continues alive and well into the 21st century and beyond.

Executive Summary

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a survey mandated by the U.S. Congress to collect and report information about student achievement in various academic subjects, such as mathematics, science, reading, writing, history, geography, and civics. The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) sets policy and the overall dimensions for the assessment program. NAGB has scheduled a National Assessment in civics for 1998 to gauge knowledge and skills about civics and government of the nation's 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade students.

Introduction to the Project

To gauge the civic knowledge and skills of the nation's 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade students, an assessment has been scheduled for 1998 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. A biennial, congressionally mandated survey, NAEP sometimes is called "The Nation's Report Card" because for more than 25 years it has collected and reported survey-based information about student achievement in mathematics, science, reading, writing, history, geography, and other subjects, including civics. NAEP is not a national test; however, it is a barometer or broad indicator of how much and how well students are learning. It is not used to gather information on individual students or as a basis for sanctions or rewards in the education system. In accordance with law, NAEP does not report scores for individual students or schools.

The primary task of the 1998 NAEP Civics Consensus Project was development of the Assessment Framework to:

- Specify the civic knowledge and skills that students should possess at grades 4, 8, and 12.
- Describe the desired characteristics of the 1998 assessment of civics.
- Present preliminary descriptions of the three levels of achievement—basic, proficient, and advanced—by which students' performance should be judged and reported in that assessment.

The Framework for the 1998 Civics Assessment was developed through a national consensus-building process that involved a Steering Committee, Planning Committee, and a project Management Team. The Steering Committee, made up of representatives of major education and policy organizations and of business and government, oversaw and guided the development of the Framework. The Planning Committee, composed of teachers, curriculum specialists, teacher educators, assessment experts, and lay people, drafted this Framework. The Management Team, which included staff of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Center for Civic Education (CCE), American Institutes for Research (AIR), and NAGB, administered and supervised the work of the project.

The project received advice about the Framework from public hearings, student forums, and written reviews by various educators, scholars, and other interested citizens. Final review and action on the Framework was the prerogative of NAGB, which is authorized by Congress to determine the content of NAEP. During the planning process, NAGB provided support and guidance through its staff and Subject Area Committee #1. The Board unanimously approved the civics recommendations in March 1996.

The Assessment Framework will be the foundation for subsequent phases of the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment Project, and assessment items will be developed in accordance with it. These items will be administered to representative samples of students at grades 4, 8, and 12 throughout the United States. Interpretation of responses to the assessment items will be guided by the Framework. Finally, the report to the American public of the assessment findings will be based on the Framework.

Considerations for Development of the Civics Framework

A constitutional democracy, such as the United States of America, requires informed, effective, and responsible citizens for its maintenance and improvement. If the polity would survive and thrive, citizens must have adequate knowledge of its principles and institutions, skills in applying this knowledge to civic life, and dispositions that incline them to protect individual rights and promote the common good. Therefore, sound civic education, the effective preparation of citizens to fulfill their responsibilities to sustain and enhance self-government, is an essential condition of any constitutional democracy.

There are many sources of civic education in American society, such as families, religious institutions, the mass media, business and professional associations, labor unions, and community organizations. The schools, however, have a special and historic responsibility for the development of citizenship. If the society and its schools fail in their civic mission, then the constitutional democracy will be at risk.

Given the extreme importance of competent citizenship and effective civic education for the well-being of our constitutional democracy, it is imperative that we have adequate information about what students know and are able to do with regard to civics and government. The data yielded by the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment will indicate generally how much and how well students are learning the essential knowledge and skills about democratic citizenship and government. These findings will suggest general needs and directions for the improvement of the teaching and learning of civics. It is important to note that the data, by law, cannot be used to gather information on particular students or schools or as a basis for sanctions or rewards in the educational system.

A NAEP survey of civics was last conducted in 1988 and reported to the public in 1990. Because the most recent assessment of civic education will be 10 years old in 1998, NAGB decided that a new assessment should be undertaken. This new assessment comes at a time of heightened public concern about the quality and direction of constitutional government, citizenship, and civic education in America.

Components of the Assessment Framework

The Assessment Framework for this project is related strongly to the first edition of voluntary national standards for civic education, developed and published by the Center for Civic Education in 1994. The widespread favorable reception of the *National Standards for Civics and Government* and their general approval by the public, professional educational institutions, and schools has allowed them to be a major reference for development of the 1998 Civics Assessment Framework.

This Assessment Framework has three interrelated components: knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions. In concert, these components should be the essential elements of civic education in the United States. Therefore, the NAEP Civics

Assessment should treat students' achievement of these three connected components of civic education.

Civic Knowledge. The civic knowledge component, the core of this Framework, is embodied in five fundamental and enduring questions:

I. What are civic life, politics, and government?

II. What are the foundations of the American political system?

III. How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?

IV. What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?

V. What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

These essential content questions are taken from the *National Standards for Civics and Government*. They denote basic concepts about the theory and practice of constitutional democracy in the United States, which students need to become informed and responsible citizens.

Civic Skills. Intellectual and participatory civic skills involve the use of knowledge to think and act effectively and in a reasoned manner in response to the challenges of life in a constitutional democracy. Intellectual skills enable students to learn and apply civic knowledge in the many and varied roles of citizens. These skills help citizens identify, describe, explain, and analyze information and arguments, as well as evaluate, take, and defend positions on public issues. Participatory skills enable citizens to monitor and influence public and civic life by working with others, clearly articulating ideas and interests, building coalitions, seeking consensus, negotiating compromise, and managing conflict.

Civic Dispositions. The third component of this Framework, civic dispositions, refers to the inclinations or "habits of the heart," as de Tocqueville called them, that pervade all aspects of citizenship. In a constitutional democracy, these dispositions pertain to the rights and responsibilities of individuals in society and to the advancement of the ideals of the polity. They include the dispositions to become an independent member of society; respect individual worth and human dignity; assume the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen; participate in civic affairs in

an informed, thoughtful, and effective manner; and promote the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy.

Contexts of Civic Education. The acquisition of knowledge and skills and the development of civic dispositions take place within a variety of contexts. Those of home, school, community, state, nation, and the world are especially important in civic education. They constitute the primary arenas in which citizens acquire knowledge and skills as well as put their knowledge and skills into practice.

In summary, the major dimensions of the proposed assessment on civics are: content knowledge, intellectual skills applied to that knowledge, participatory skills, dispositions, and the context in which understanding of civics is learned and used. These dimensions constitute the structure or framework for the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment.

Desired Attributes of the Assessment

The design of an assessment consists of three main components: the content to be assessed, the processes or methods by which that content is assessed, and the levels of achievement or performance expectations reflected in the assessment.

Emphasis for Each Component. Each question on the assessment will measure both knowledge and an intellectual skill. In addition, test exercises may measure students' understanding of the importance of participatory skills and civic dispositions in a constitutional democracy. Some questions may be written in terms of the various contexts in which students apply their knowledge and demonstrate their skills. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 of the Framework document indicate recommended proportions of the exercise pool that would pertain to the knowledge and intellectual skills dimensions, which are the major components of the assessment.

Exercise Formats. The 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment should consist of both multiple-choice and open-ended test exercises. Sixty percent of student time should be spent on multiple-choice questions, with the remaining 40 percent allocated to open-ended exercises.

Multiple-choice questions should be developed to address the full range of knowledge and skill areas outlined in this Framework. Both stand-alone multiple-choice questions and a series of questions related to stimulus selections are acceptable.

Open-ended tasks should consist of short- and extended-response questions. Short-answer tasks may require students to provide a short descriptive phrase, several sentences, or other similar responses. Extended tasks may ask students to write a paragraph or two, develop a chart to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a certain course of action, or create similar indepth responses.

Design of Assessment Tasks. A wide variety of materials should be used in designing assessment tasks. Materials such as a quotation, political cartoon, or sample ballot may be incorporated as a test question. Information used to stimulate students' thinking about a concept or topic are of two major types, text-based and non-text-based. Text-based stimulus materials may include excerpts from core civics documents, quotations, excerpts from speeches or landmark cases of the U.S. Supreme Court, newspaper articles, hypothetical cases, and many other sources. Students may be asked questions about documents such as a sample ballot, lyrics of a song, or a proposed rule or law. Not all stimulus material needs to be printed in the test booklet. To represent the dynamic, engaging nature of civics, the assessment should include many test questions related to non-text-based stimulus material. The list of possible stimulus materials of this type includes photographs, political cartoons, maps, timelines, tables and graphs, campaign literature, art works related to civic events and significant individuals, and a wide variety of other sources.

Preliminary Achievement Level Descriptions. Achievement levels describe how well students should perform on the knowledge and skills measured by the assessment. The levels define appropriate expectations of student performance in civics at grades 4, 8, and 12 as measured by NAEP. These achievement levels, basic, proficient, and advanced, have been established by NAGB for each grade level and each assessment area.

Basic denotes partial mastery of the knowledge and skills, but performance that is fundamental for proficient work in grades 4, 8, and 12. **Proficient** represents solid academic performance and competency over challenging subject matter. **Advanced** achievement on this assessment represents superior performance. Specific statements that indicate achievement in civics at the three levels—basic, proficient, and advanced—are presented at the end of chapter four of the Framework. These statements reflect the three components of the Framework: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions.

Trend Special Study. The 1998 assessment should include a trend component. It would involve administering one or two intact blocks of items from the 1988 Civics Assessment to a subsample of students in each grade.

Conclusion

The design of the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment Framework, while maintaining some conceptual continuity with the 1988 NAEP Civics Assessment, takes account of current reforms in civic education. It also is consistent with the *National Standards for Civics and Government*.

This Framework is not a design for a curriculum in civics, although it may be used to inform and guide curriculum development projects. Rather, this Framework is the foundation for a particular project, the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment.

Students who master the knowledge and skills outlined in this document will have a greater sense of the productive and creative roles they can play as citizens of the United States in the 21st century. They also will have the capacity for effective and responsible citizenship in the world's oldest constitutional democracy.

Chapter One: Introduction

Citizenship—commitment to and participation in a community's civic life—is the engine of constitutional democracy and a free society. Knowledge of the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of citizenship fuel that engine. Without the participation of informed, effective, and responsible citizens, a democratic republic cannot and does not function, nor can it make progress toward its ideals. It is important, therefore, that Americans understand the civic values on which the nation was founded and by which it has since been guided. It is also important to assess young people's knowledge of civics and their understanding of the principles by which the nation does and must govern itself. Any increase in citizens' civic knowledge, skills, and participation strengthens our republic; any reduction in their knowledge, skills, and participation weakens it. Thus, civic education is central to American education and essential to the well-being of American constitutional democracy.

To gauge the civic knowledge and skills of the nation's 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade students, an assessment has been scheduled for 1998 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). A biennial, congressionally mandated survey, NAEP sometimes is called "The Nation's Report Card" because for more than 25 years it has collected and reported survey-based information about student achievement in mathematics, science, reading, writing, history, geography, and other subjects, including civics. NAEP is not a national test; however, it is a barometer or broad indicator of how much and how well students are learning. It is not used to gather information on individual students, nor is it a basis for sanctions or rewards in the education system. In accordance with law, NAEP does not report scores for individual students or schools.

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), NAEP's policymaking body, oversees the activities of each assessment and is authorized by Congress to determine the content of the assessment. To prepare for the 1998 assessment of civics, this Framework, or set of guidelines, has been developed through an extensive, national, consensus-building process involving experienced educators, scholars,

students, and citizens from many walks of American life. The purpose of this Framework is to:

- Specify civic knowledge and skills that students at grades 4, 8, and 12 should possess and on which they should be assessed.
- Describe the desired characteristics and approaches of the 1998 assessment of civics.
- Present preliminary descriptions of the three levels of achievement—basic, proficient, and advanced—by which students' performance will be judged and reported in that assessment.

NAEP and Voluntary Standards

Achievement standards, the criteria by which students' command of knowledge and skills in specific academic subjects is measured, are becoming increasingly important. Voluntary standards in disciplines such as mathematics, geography, and civics have been produced at the national, state, and local levels, and curricular frameworks derived from them continue to be developed. These standards provide guidelines for teaching, learning, curriculum development, and teacher preparation, as well as for the writing of textbooks and instructional materials.

As voluntary professional standards become reference points for schools, it is important that NAEP take them into account in designing the content and approaches of its assessments. Furthermore, the National Assessment Governing Board's policy mandates that the content of the "Nation's Report Card" reflect voluntary national standards appropriately. That is, each assessment should measure the effectiveness of practice both as it is and according to new voluntary standards, as it ought to be.

The first edition of voluntary national standards for civic education, the *National Standards for Civics and Government*, was completed and published by the Center for Civic Education in 1994. The *Standards*' widespread favorable reception and their general approval by public agencies, professional educational institutions, and schools has allowed them to be a major, subject-matter reference point for planning the 1998 Civics Assessment, providing a focused and forward-looking direction for civic education. In addition, other existing standards, curriculum frameworks, and assessments from states and school districts, as well as the

significant literature concerning civic education, have been reviewed and considered in planning for the 1998 Civics Assessment. A review indicated that state practices and directions are moving toward the new *National Standards for Civics and Government* and that state plans for improving civic education are generally consistent with one another.

The *National Standards for Civics and Government* and this NAEP Framework embody a broad consensus on what is of enduring significance in the discipline of civics and what students at grades 4, 8, and 12 should know and be able to do. These two documents constitute a set of challenging expectations; they are intended to signal the importance of ensuring high quality civic education for all students. The 1998 assessment assumes that substantial progress already has been made toward the goals reflected in the national and state standards and this Framework. If a second assessment of civics were to occur sometime beyond the year 2000, even greater progress should be reflected.

Relationship Between NAEP and International Civics Assessment

An international assessment of civic education being conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is scheduled to occur concurrently with the NAEP Civics Assessment in 1998. Involving about 15 to 20 countries, the IEA assessment will consist of two phases. The first phase will be a descriptive profile or case study of civic education in each of the participating countries, including the United States. The second phase will be an assessment of student knowledge and skills in civics and government in each participating nation.

The coincidence of the two assessments offers several opportunities and benefits for the NAEP assessment. The profile prepared for the international project should offer important contextual information for NAEP. The potential exists for the national and international assessments to be linked so that achievement data from the United States and variables influencing student performance may be compared with international findings.

Development of the NAEP Civics Framework

The 1998 NAEP Civics Consensus Project began in February 1995 with the award of a contract by the National Assessment Governing Board to the Council of Chief State School Officers

(CCSSO). Subcontracts were awarded to the Center for Civic Education (CCE) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR). A national consensus-building process took place over the course of the following year. A planning committee composed of teachers, curriculum specialists, teacher educators, assessment experts, and lay people drafted this Framework. The Planning Committee's work was guided by a Steering Committee made up of representatives of key education and policy organizations augmented by members from business, government, and the general public. Both the Planning and Steering Committees benefited from advice obtained through public hearings, student forums, and written reviews of successive drafts of this Framework. During the planning process, NAGB provided support and guidance through its staff and Subject Area Committee #1. Details of the planning process are highlighted in appendix A.

The NAEP Civics Framework document is supplemented by three other technical documents—*Civics Assessment and Exercise Specifications, Recommendations for Background Questions*, and *Reporting Recommendations*—which provide additional recommendations and criteria by which the assessment will be developed and the standards by which civic knowledge and skills will be assessed and reported.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress in civics in 1998 is a welcome development for several reasons. First, the National Education Goals proclaim, "By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including . . . civics and government . . . so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment . . . All students will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate . . . good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility." Second, there is growing public awareness of the need for and the importance of civic education as evidenced in recent opinion polls. Third, policymakers who appreciate the utility of reliable information about students' learning at critical junctures of their school experiences, realize that a decade has elapsed since the last civics assessment. Still another reason that the scheduled assessment is important is its potential to sustain the momentum created by the publication of national and state standards for civics and government.

All of those involved in the development of the forthcoming civics assessment are keenly aware that its ultimate significance will depend upon the extent to which it can be used to improve

instruction and increase learning. By providing fair, accurate, and timely information on student achievement at the national and state levels to the public, policymakers, and educators, this assessment can affect improvement in civic education for all of America's children. That students are well prepared for citizenship is a matter of importance to them as individuals and to our society as a whole and to the maintenance and improvement of our constitutional democracy.

Chapter Two: Civic Education and the Issues Framing the Assessment

The goal of education in civics and government is informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy. Their effective and responsible participation requires the acquisition of a body of knowledge and of intellectual and participatory skills. Effective and responsible participation also is furthered by development of certain dispositions or traits of character that enhance the individual's capacity to participate in the political process and contribute to the healthy functioning of the political system and improvement of society.

—The National Standards for Civics and Government.

Civic education in a constitutional democracy is the preparation of citizens to fulfill their responsibilities to sustain and enhance self-government. Democratic self-government in the United States requires citizens to participate in the affairs of their communities, state, and nation. To participate effectively, citizens need intellectual and participatory skills, as well as knowledge about their government and society. Acquisition of civic knowledge and skills makes possible a reasoned commitment to those fundamental values and principles essential to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy.

The Importance of Civic Education

Many institutions help to develop Americans' knowledge and skills and shape their civic character and commitments. Families, religious institutions, the media, business, and community groups exert important influences. Schools, however, bear a special and historic responsibility for the development of civic competence and civic responsibility. Schools can and should provide effective civic education through both formal and informal means from the earliest grades through high school.

From the time of the nation's founding, knowledge of government and civic life has been considered to be central to the endurance of the United States as a democratic republic. Thomas Jefferson believed that an uneducated citizenry was a contradiction in terms. John F. Kennedy, recalling the old saying that the course of civilization is a race between catastrophe and education, insisted that in a democracy such as ours "we must make sure that education wins."

Despite a national consensus on the need for civic education in elementary and secondary schools, this vital part of students' education is seldom given sustained and systematic attention in the K–12 curriculum. Inattention to civic education stems principally from the assumption that the knowledge and skills citizens need emerge as by-products of the study of other subjects or as an outcome of the process of schooling itself rather than as a consequence of a focused study of civics. As most studies of civic knowledge and dispositions show, this is not so.

Current Status of Civics and Government Instruction

The goals of democratic civic education are proclaimed in mission statements and curriculum guides of school districts and state departments of education. Civic education practices in schools, however, often do not measure up to these proclamations. Examination of civics curricula, instructional practices, and earlier assessments of civic knowledge reveal that:

- Although civics and government are often included as elements of social studies instruction in grades K–8, substantial treatment of those subjects is unusual.
- American history courses tend to emphasize social history and devote insufficient time to political history, such as the nation's founding period and subsequent constitutional development.
- Fewer than 25 states require secondary school students to complete at least a one-semester course in civics or government, although school and district requirements at the local level may be higher.
- Assessments of student achievement in civics by national, state, and local education agencies tend to be inadequate and infrequent.

It also is apparent that the neglect of civic education in the schools has negative consequences for American students, schools, and society. Principally, this has been evidenced by unacceptably low levels of student achievement in measured knowledge of civics; voter turnout, particularly by citizens aged 18–24; and adult participation in civic life. For example:

- *The 1988 NAEP Civics Report Card* revealed that students tended to have only a superficial knowledge of civics; furthermore, the knowledge of civics that they did possess had declined since 1976.
- The same *Report Card* indicated disturbing disparities in achievement among some subpopulations. The achievement of white students tended to be significantly higher than that of Black and Hispanic students; and males were more likely than females to achieve the highest levels of civic proficiency.
- The 1995 nationwide appraisal of the attitudes and dispositions of first-year college students conducted by the UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) Higher Education Institute revealed that the percentage of college freshmen who said that paying close attention to political affairs is important had declined to just 15 percent, its lowest level in 30 years.
- Membership records of such diverse organizations as the PTA, the Elks Club, the League of Women Voters, the Red Cross, labor unions, and even bowling leagues have declined by roughly 25 to 50 percent over the past two to three decades, according to research conducted by Robert Putnam of Harvard University in 1995 and 1996.

Despite these negative reports about civic knowledge and participation, several promising and positive trends are emerging throughout the nation. In fact, the negative reports are at least partially responsible for the increased interest by the public in incorporating into the school curriculum greater attention to civic education. At the Second Annual White House Conference on Character Building for a Democratic, Civil Society, held in 1995, members of the Task Force on Civic Education drew attention to some of the more positive trends. For example:

- Increasing numbers of policymaking bodies are reaffirming that effective civic education is essential to successful schooling.

- State and local curriculum framework documents are beginning to reflect the content and concepts embodied in the voluntary *National Standards for Civics and Government*.
- Civics and government courses in the nation's schools are becoming more substantive; they are incorporating more content from such formal disciplines as political science, law, economics, political philosophy, and history.
- Curricula in civic education reflect greater concern for the international context of public affairs and for the comparative analysis of political, economic, and legal systems.
- Interest in encouraging students to provide volunteer service to the community and in a more formal service learning curriculum is growing.
- Elected officials, representatives of civic organizations, lawyers, judges, law enforcement personnel, and other community resource people are volunteering more often to assist educators in teacher training and student activities.

Previous NAEP Assessments of Civics and Citizenship and the 1998 Assessment

The first national assessments, administered by NAEP in 1969–70, were in science, writing, and citizenship. In the ensuing years, civics was assessed four more times—1972, 1976, 1982, and 1988. Two of those assessments (1976 and 1982) were conducted as a part of the assessment of the whole field of the social studies. In 1988, however, attention focused solely on civics and government, as will the forthcoming assessment.

Table 2.1—Previous NAEP Assessments of Civics and Citizenship

Subjects	Years
Citizenship	1969–70
Social Studies (including Citizenship)	1971–72
Social Studies (including Citizenship)	1975–76
Citizenship and Social Studies	1981–82
Civics: U.S. Government and Politics	1988

The most recent civics assessment, conducted in 1988, measured students' understanding of:

- The purposes of democratic government and of the principles expressed in basic American documents, such as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights.
- The three branches of government and the organizational principles by which they function.
- The mechanisms by which citizens and politicians reach decisions and transform these decisions into political action.
- Rights, responsibilities, and the law—the specific rights and liberties guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution and the relationship between laws and rights.

The 1988 assessment was administered in approximately 1,000 public and private schools to a representative sample of more than 11,000 students in grades 4, 8, and 12. At grade 4, the assessment was composed of multiple-choice questions. At grades 8 and 12, the test was composed of multiple-choice questions and one constructed-response item (i.e., a question that requires a considered written response). Students also completed a questionnaire that elicited demographic information about themselves and about their experiences in studying civics and government. These background variables and performance data were analyzed to reveal patterns of learning about civics and government.

Because the most recent survey of civic education will be 10 years old in 1998, the National Assessment Governing Board has decided that a new assessment of students' knowledge of the subject should be undertaken. Plans for the new assessment have been influenced by growing public concern about the condition of American government and of civil society—the sphere of voluntary individual, social, and economic relationships and organizations that, although influenced by law, is not part of the nation's formal governmental structure. The 1998 assessment, planned in response to this public concern, is designed to provide Americans with the first measure in a decade of students' knowledge of civics and of the skills of American citizenship.

Issues Considered in Designing the Civics Assessment

To design a national assessment in civics, an important first step was to identify and articulate relevant issues. Therefore, a paper entitled *Issues Concerning a National Assessment in Civics* was developed and circulated widely for review. Key issues identified are the following:

I. What evidence is there that a civics assessment is needed at this time in our nation's history?

- How well are the nation's schools discharging their historic responsibilities for the development of competent and responsible citizens?
- What purposes should periodic assessments of civic education serve in a constitutional democracy?

II. What knowledge and skills should be measured in that assessment?

- How can a Framework for assessment be designed so that it measures not only what information or knowledge students have but how well they understand it?
- What intellectual and participatory skills are important for informed, effective, and responsible citizenship; how are they developed and how can they be assessed?
- How much should NAEP reflect the content included in the *National Standards for Civics and Government*, previous NAEP assessments in civics, and other sources?

III. How well do students understand the ideals and fundamental values and principles upon which American constitutional democracy is based?

- How can a Framework for assessment be designed so that it measures how well students understand the ideals and the fundamental values and principles on which American constitutional democracy is based?
- How familiar are students with the core documents that set forth American ideals and the values and principles of

constitutional democracy such as the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and *The Federalist Papers*?

- How well are students able to apply their understanding of fundamental values and principles to the analysis and evaluation of particular situations or cases?
- How does the understanding students have of constitutional democracy change as they progress through school?

IV. How should achievement levels in civics be assessed?

- What criteria should be used to establish preliminary achievement level descriptions?
- In the domain of civics, what knowledge, understandings, and skills are required for basic, proficient, and advanced performances in grades 4, 8, and 12?
- How can NAEP data, reported in terms of achievement levels, be used by the public, policymakers, and educators to improve civics instruction and increase student learning?

V. What school factors are associated with the civic proficiency of students, and how can these be evaluated?

- How much and what kind of formal instruction in civics and government do students receive in grades K–4, 5–8, and 9–12?
- How, where, and what kinds of informal instruction or experiences in civics and government do students receive in the school setting (e.g., student government, extra- or co-curricular activities, and school-sponsored community service)?
- What is the relationship between student achievement and factors such as teachers' academic preparation and the teaching and learning strategies used in the classroom?

VI. What kinds of contextual information should be gathered by the assessment?

- What opportunities does the community afford students to develop the intellectual and participatory skills they need for informed, effective, and responsible citizenship?
- How does the media affect students' knowledge, skills, and civic dispositions?
- What efforts need to be made to ensure that the contextual information gathered and the manner in which it is obtained do not infringe on the privacy of the respondents or their families and friends?
- What efforts need to be made to ensure that inquiries designed to elicit contextual information are grounded in research and that they will, in all probability yield data that will help to improve the education of America's children?

VII. Which assessment strategies should be used?

- What types of test questions can best be used to measure knowledge and skills?
- What are the costs and benefits of newer forms of assessment for students, teachers, parents, and the community at large?
- How do teachers use the assessment results?
- What efforts need to be made to ensure that achievement measures are not biased against any population group because of race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic circumstances, or language spoken at home?

VIII. How can the assessment be designed to provide information relevant to policymakers, educators, and the public, information that can be used to improve civic education for all students?

- How might findings from NAEP help national and state legislators, school board members, parents, and others evaluate and improve civic education in their own areas of responsibility?
- How might NAEP results be used to inform and improve the preservice education and the professional development of teachers?
- How can or should NAEP results be communicated to the media so that they are accurately reported and so that they can contribute to better education in civics and government for all students?

IX. How can the assessment be designed so that it facilitates achievement of the multiple goals of NAEP?

- What practices used in previous assessments have proven to be of most worth and how can they be identified and utilized in the current assessment?
- How should trends in educational performance be identified and reported?
- What information about the current status of teaching and learning in civics will be most useful to NAEP's many and varied constituencies and how should it be reported?
- How can a reasonable balance be struck in an assessment program so that it measures both existing and more challenging, emerging programs in civics education?

There is an undeniable need for sustained and systematic attention to civics education and for better information on how we are doing in educating our children so that they will become informed, effective, and responsible citizens. Never in our nation's history has this need been greater.

Chapter Three: The Civics Assessment: Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

Civic education is central to American education and to the well-being of American constitutional democracy. Civic education also is important to civil society—that historically essential sector of society composed of nongovernmental voluntary, community, fraternal organizations, clubs, and religious institutions. Sustained and systematic attention to civics, government, and civil society in the K–12 curriculum enables students to build on the knowledge they acquire in each successive grade. Therefore, students' understanding of civic life, politics, and government should increase both in scope and depth as they progress through the elementary, middle, and high school years. In addition, their command of essential intellectual and participatory skills should continue to develop as they move toward the assumption of the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Introduction to Components of the Framework

The 1998 Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress in civics has three interrelated components: **knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions**. Taken together, these components should form the essential elements of civic education in the United States. Development of a NAEP assessment of student achievement in civics, therefore, should fully reflect the need to evaluate students' command of these three components of civic education.

The **knowledge component**, the core of this framework, is embodied in the form of five significant and enduring questions. These are questions that have continued to engage not only political philosophers and politicians; they are questions that do—or should—engage every thoughtful citizen. The five questions are:

I. What are civic life, politics, and government?

II. What are the foundations of the American political system?

III. How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?

IV. What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?

V. What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

The **intellectual and participatory skills component** of civic education involves the use of knowledge to think and act effectively and in a reasoned manner in response to the challenges of civic life in a constitutional democracy. Intellectual skills enable students to learn and apply civic knowledge in the many and varied roles of citizens. These skills help citizens identify, describe, explain, and analyze information and arguments as well as evaluate, take, and defend positions on public policies. Participatory skills enable citizens to monitor and influence public and civic life by working with others, clearly articulating ideas and interests, building coalitions, seeking consensus, negotiating compromise, and managing conflict.

The third component of this Framework, **civic dispositions**, refers to the inclinations or "habits of the heart," as de Tocqueville called them, that pervade all aspects of citizenship. In a constitutional democracy, these dispositions pertain to the rights and responsibilities of individuals in society and to the advancement of the ideals of the polity. They include the dispositions to become an independent member of society; respect individual worth and human dignity; assume the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen; abide by the "rules of the game," such as accepting the legitimate decisions of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority; participate in civic affairs in an informed, thoughtful, and effective manner; and promote the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy.

The acquisition of knowledge and skills and the development of civic dispositions take place within a variety of contexts. Those of home, school, community, state, nation, and the world are especially important in civic education. They constitute the primary arenas in which citizens acquire knowledge and skills as well as put their knowledge and skills into practice.

Knowledge Component

It is important that all students have an opportunity to consider the essential questions about government and civil society that continue to challenge thoughtful people. Although there are various ways of phrasing these questions, this Assessment Framework follows the *National Standards for Civics and Government* in organizing them in five major categories.

What follows is a general description, expressed in the form of significant and enduring questions, of these five broad content areas that are to be assessed. A chart summarizing the content for each area by grade can be found in appendix B.

1. What Are Civic Life, Politics, and Government?

Citizens need to understand civic life, politics, government, and civil society so that they can make informed judgments about what government should and should not do, how they are to live their lives together, and how they can support the proper use of authority or combat the abuse of political power.

- *Civic life* is the public life of citizens concerned with affairs of the community and nation as contrasted with private or personal life, which is devoted to the pursuit of private and personal satisfactions.
- *Politics* is a process by which people reach collective decisions that are generally regarded as binding and enforced as common policy.
- *Government* may be described as the formal institutions and processes of a politically organized society with authority to make, enforce, and interpret laws and other binding rules about matters of common interest and concern, such as society's order, security, and prosperity. The term *government* also refers to the group of people, acting in formal political institutions at national, state, and local levels, who exercise decision-making power or enforce laws and regulations. Some parts of government such as Congress, state legislatures, and city councils make laws; other parts, including federal, state, and local agencies such as taxation authorities and police, enforce laws; and still others, such as federal and state courts, interpret laws and rules.

- *Civil society* refers to the complex network of freely formed, voluntary political, social, and economic associations. Among the many nongovernmental actors making up civil society are groups such as parent-teacher, professional, and business associations, labor unions, religious, charitable, and youth organizations, and social and fraternal clubs. A vital civil society is an essential component of a constitutional democracy, because it prevents the abuse or excessive concentration of power by government. The organizations of civil society also "are public laboratories in which citizens learn democracy by doing it."

At the early elementary level, students may begin to understand government and civil society by analogy with the governance of the family and school. As they progress through school, their knowledge and understanding of civic life, politics, and government should increase and deepen.

II. What Are the Foundations of the American Political System?

The American political system is based upon the values and principles of constitutional democracy expressed in such fundamental American documents as the Declaration of Independence; the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights; the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom; the *Federalist Papers;* and Antifederalist writings. Other documents that express and elaborate upon the values and principles of the founding documents include the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham City Jail,* and landmark U.S. Supreme Court decisions. Such fundamental expressions of American principles and values are important for students to understand for several reasons. First, Americans are a people bound together by the ideals, values, and principles they share rather than by kinship, ethnicity, or religion, which are ties that bind some other nations of the world. Second, Americans' ideals, values, and principles have shaped their political institutions and affected their political processes. Third, the ideals, values, and principles set forth in the nation's core documents are criteria that Americans use to judge the means and ends of government, as well as those of the myriad groups and organizations which are part of civil society. Finally, understanding of fundamental principles provides the basis for a reasoned commitment to the ideals, values, and principles of American constitutional democracy.

The values and principles of American constitutional democracy are sometimes in conflict, and their very meaning and application are often disputed. For example, although most Americans agree that the idea of equality is an important value, they may disagree about what priority it should be given in comparison with another value, such as liberty. And they may disagree on the meaning of equality when it is applied to a specific situation.

In addition, disparities have always existed between the realities of daily life and the ideals of American constitutional democracy. Citizens should thus be encouraged to consider that while the history of the United States has been marked by continuing attempts to narrow the gap between the nation's ideals and reality, it has also achieved a wide degree of consensus as to what those ideals are and what that reality ought to be. It is on the basis of these ideals that Americans have united in political movements to abolish slavery, extend the voting franchise, remove legal support for segregation, and provide equality of opportunity. Citizens should be familiar with historical and contemporary efforts in which Americans have joined forces to work toward the achievement of their shared ideals.

Americans, however, realize that the United States is not Utopia, nor is a constitutional democracy Utopian. Rather, a constitutional democracy is a way of allowing the competing ideas, values, goals, and interests of people, individually or in groups, to compete with one another in a peaceful manner. A constitutional democracy affords its citizens means of reconciling their differences and their competing visions of truth without resorting to violence or oppression.

Students in the early grades should become acquainted with the basic values and principles which are the foundation of the American political system. Their knowledge and understanding should increase as they progress through middle and high school.

III. How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embody the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy?

The system of government established by the Constitution has resulted in limited government and a complex dispersal of powers. As a result, Americans live under the jurisdiction of national, state, and local governments, all of whose powers and responsibilities are separated and shared among different branches and agencies. Each

of these governments—national, state, and local—affects directly the daily lives of all Americans: their security, their opportunities, their standard of living, and the taxes they pay.

The Framers of the Constitution saw this complex system as a principal means of limiting the power of government. Multiple levels of government provide numerous opportunities for citizens to participate in their own governance. The system also reflects the principle of popular sovereignty, enables citizens to hold their governments accountable, and helps to ensure the protection of the rights of individuals. Citizens who understand the justification for this system of limited, dispersed, and shared power and its design are able to evaluate, monitor, and influence it more effectively.

To understand the impact of the various levels of government on their daily lives, the lives of their communities, and the welfare of the nation as a whole, students need to understand how local, state, and national governments are organized, what they do, and how they interact.

IV. What Is the Relationship of the United States to Other Nations and to World Affairs?

The United States does not exist in isolation; it is part of an interconnected world in whose development it has played and continues to play an important role. The American political tradition, including the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, has had a profound influence abroad. The nation's democratic ideals and the benefits of its free society have drawn the attention and inspired the hopes of people worldwide. In addition, the United States has exerted extensive economic, technological, and cultural influence on other nations. At the same time, the United States and its citizens have been deeply influenced by the institutions and practices of other countries and the cultures of other peoples.

To make judgments about the role of the United States in the world today and what course American foreign policy should take, citizens need to understand the major elements of international relations and how world affairs affect their own lives and the security and well-being of their communities, states, and nation. They also need to comprehend how commerce, travel, communications, and the international economy bring them into relationships with people everywhere.

In elementary and middle schools, students should acquire basic knowledge of the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs. In senior high school, students should develop a more sophisticated understanding of the behavior of the United States, other nations, and international organizations in the world arena.

V. What Are the Roles of Citizens in American Democracy?

Citizenship in American constitutional democracy differs from membership in authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. In the United States, each citizen is a full and equal member of a self-governing community and is endowed with fundamental rights and entrusted with responsibilities. Among those responsibilities is seeing that the rights of other individuals are respected. It also is a fundamental responsibility of citizens to see that government serves the purposes for which it was created and that it does not abuse the power that the people have delegated to it. For instance, the Declaration of Independence proclaims the primary purpose of government: "That to secure these Rights [Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness] governments are instituted among Men." Further, the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution says that the purposes of government are to "establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty." Citizens are responsible for holding their government accountable to these purposes it was created to serve.

Citizens should understand that through their involvement in civic life and in nongovernmental organizations they can help to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods, communities, and nation. They also should understand that if they want their voices to be heard, they must become active participants in the political process. Although elections, campaigns, and voting are at the center of democratic institutions, citizens should be aware that beyond electoral politics there are many other participatory opportunities available to them. Furthermore, the attainment of individual and public goals and participation in political life tend to go hand in hand. The maintenance and improvement of American constitutional democracy is dependent upon the informed, effective, and responsible participation of its citizens.

Intellectual and Participatory Skills

If citizens are to exercise their rights and discharge their responsibilities as members of self-governing communities, they not only need to acquire a body of knowledge about civic life, politics, and government; they also need to acquire relevant intellectual and participatory skills. Unfortunately, the importance of helping all students develop skills essential for effective and responsible citizenship is not always fully appreciated. Thanks to new research into teaching and learning, however, much more is known about how children develop skills, acquire knowledge, and deepen their understandings. Something we understand now is that learning is "domain specific." For each subject area, cognitive strategies need to be defined in terms of the concepts of the field. As a result, intellectual skills germane to the field of civics and government, or to the fields of science or mathematics, cannot be learned in isolation. Knowledge of the concepts and the subject matter of civics and government is necessary, for example, to cast an intelligent vote, to understand public issues, or to interact with others to solve public problems.

Certain skills in participation are essential and also are specific to the domain of civics and government. Effective and responsible citizenship in a constitutional democracy demands more than knowing and thinking; responsible citizens are expected to participate in the governance of their communities, states, and nation, as well as in the governance of the groups or voluntary associations to which they belong.

Students can and should begin in the earliest grades to acquire the intellectual and participatory skills requisite for informed, effective, and responsible citizenship. They should continue to develop those skills as they proceed through the middle grades and high school.

Intellectual Skills

In this Framework, intellectual skills essential for informed, effective, and responsible citizenship are categorized as *identifying and describing*, *explaining and analyzing*, and *evaluating, taking, and defending* positions on public issues.

The following items listed below, under the heading "Identifying and Describing," enumerate particular intellectual skills useful to the citizen in comprehending and interpreting civic life.

Identifying and Describing

Identifying means to give the meaning or significance of things that are tangible (e.g., such as one's legislative representative) or intangible (e.g., concepts such as justice). To identify something may involve being able to distinguish it from something else; to classify or catalog something with similar items, or, in some cases, to determine its origin.

Describing means to give a verbal or written account of an item's basic attributes or characteristics; describing may refer to tangible or intangible processes, institutions, functions, purposes, or qualities.

- *Defining key terms*, e.g., constitution, constitutional government, nation-state.
- *Making distinctions*, e.g., among branches of government, between forms of government, between civil society and the state, between state and local differences in government institutions, legal systems, and jurisdictional forms.
- *Identifying individuals, symbols, institutions*, e.g., significant civic and political leaders, flags and national monuments, federal and state legislatures.
- *Identifying ideas and concepts*, e.g., patriotism, majority and minority rights, constitutionalism, civil society, nation-state.
- *Identifying emotional language and symbols*, e.g., patriot, hawk, dove, flag, Statue of Liberty.
- *Describing functions and processes*, e.g., legislative checks and balances, judicial review, foreign policy formation.
- *Describing historical origins*, e.g., of national holidays, sources of democracy, political authority.
- *Describing attributes or characteristics*, e.g., of local government, American society, systems of shared powers.

- *Classifying by attributes*, e.g., constitutional democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism.
- *Describing trends*, e.g., participation in politics and civil society, immigration, international influences on American culture.

Explaining and Analyzing

The following items under the heading "Explaining and Analyzing" refer to intellectual skills that also are of importance to the citizen.

Explaining means to identify, describe, clarify, or interpret something. One may explain, for example, the causes of events, the meaning or significance of events and ideas, or the reasons for various acts or positions.

Analyzing means to break something down into its constituent parts in order to clarify its meaning or significance. One may analyze, for example, the causes of events, the components and consequences of ideas, or social, political, or economic processes and institutions.

- *Explaining how something works*, e.g., electoral system, system of checks and balances, American federal system.
- *Analyzing reasons for acts, occurrences, and trends*, e.g., passage of the 19th amendment, urban riots, voter interest or apathy.
- *Explaining the causes and effects of events and phenomena*, e.g., creation of the Bill of Rights, election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, high or low voter turnout.
- *Analyzing the reasons or motivations for the use of emotional language*, e.g., pique public interest, spur action, gain support or sympathy.
- *Comparing and contrasting*, e.g., limited and unlimited governments, legislative and judicial functions, shared powers and parliamentary systems.
- *Distinguishing between opinion and fact*, e.g., belief that citizens cannot influence public policy *vs.* available avenues through which citizens can monitor and influence public policy.

- *Distinguishing between means and ends*, e.g., between trial by jury and justice, taxation and public safety, foreign aid and national security interests.
- *Clarifying responsibilities*, e.g., between personal and public responsibilities, between elected officials and citizens.
- *Interpreting the meaning or significance of events, ideas, phenomena*, e.g., ratification of the Constitution, rule of law, impact of immigration.

Evaluating, Taking, and Defending Positions

The items listed below under the heading, "Evaluating, Taking, and Defending Positions," refer to skills required for citizens to assess issues on the public agenda, to make judgments about issues, and to discuss their assessments with others in public or private.

Evaluating positions means to use criteria or standards to make judgments about the strengths and weaknesses of positions on issues, goals promoted by the position, or means advocated to attain those goals.

Taking a position refers to using criteria or standards to arrive at a position one can support by selecting from existing positions or creating a novel one.

Defending a position refers to advancing arguments and offering evidence in favor of one's position and responding to or taking into account arguments opposed to one's position.

- *Identifying strengths and weaknesses*, e.g., of proposed rules, regulations, or legislation.
- *Challenging ad hominem and other illogical arguments*, e.g., name calling, personal attacks, insinuation and innuendo, circular arguments.
- *Evaluating the validity of arguments, analogies, and data*, e.g., source of data, omission of data, logical cohesion, circularity of argument, appropriate correspondence of analogies.
- *Citing evidence in support or rejection*, e.g., reliability of evidence, relevance of evidence, substantiation or contradiction of two or more kinds of evidence.

- *Predicting probable consequences*, e.g., reliability of predictions, degrees of probability, comparability to past instances.
- *Evaluating means and ends*, e.g., means not conducive to ends, unethical means and ends, ends that conflict with other desirable ends.
- *Assessing the costs and benefits of alternatives*, e.g., numbers of people positively or negatively affected, monetary costs *vs.* societal value.
- *Choosing a position from existing alternatives*, e.g., analyzing existing positions, judging positions using appropriate criteria.
- *Creating a novel position*, e.g., extracting the best ideas from alternatives, combining elements in unique ways.
- *Defending a position*, e.g., consistency with fundamental values and principles, costs outweighed by benefits, best and least objectionable among alternatives.
- *Responding to opposing arguments*, e.g., citing appropriate evidence, countering misstatements or emotive language, pointing out inconsistencies in opposing arguments, accommodating the strengths of different positions, taking into account the best case against one's own position.

Participatory Skills

Participatory skills essential for informed, effective, and responsible citizenship are categorized as interacting, monitoring, and influencing. Education for citizenship must not only address the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual skills; it must also focus on the development of skills required for informed, competent, and responsible participation in the political process and civil society.

The items below refer to various abilities of the citizen to deal effectively with others in political and civic contexts.

Interacting pertains to the skills citizens need to communicate and to work cooperatively with others. To interact is to be responsive to one's fellow citizens. To interact is to question, to answer, and to deliberate with civility, as well as to build coalitions and to manage conflict in a fair, peaceful manner.

Monitoring politics and government refers to the skills citizens need to track the handling of issues by the political process and by

government. Monitoring the performance of government and the course of public affairs is essential, if citizens are to participate intelligently.

Influencing refers to the skills required to affect the processes of politics and governance, both formal and informal processes of governance in the community.

Interacting

- *Working in small groups and committees*, pooling information, exchanging opinions, formulating plans of action.
- *Listening*, gaining information, ideas, different perspectives.
- *Questioning*, clarifying information or points of view, eliciting facts and opinions.
- *Discussing public affairs* in a knowledgeable, responsible, and civil manner in school, with neighbors and friends, in community groups and public forums.
- *Participating in voluntary associations and interest groups*, promoting ideas, policies, interests.
- *Building coalitions*, enlisting the support of like-minded individuals and groups to promote candidates, policies.
- *Managing conflicts* through mediation, negotiation, compromise, consensus-building, adjudication.
- *Performing school and community service*, serving as a representative or elected leader, organizing a public issues forum, working for one's religious, civic, or charitable organizations.
- *Using media resources*, obtaining information, exchanging ideas, advocating public policies.
- *Deliberating on public issues*, e.g., health care, employment, environmental concerns.
- *Assessing others' arguments and positions* for their validity rather than because of who it is that utters them, remaining calm in the face of opposition.

Monitoring

- *Listening* attentively to fellow citizens, proceedings of public bodies, media reports.
- *Questioning* public officials, experts, and others to elicit information, determine responsibility.
- *Holding public officials accountable* for using their authority consistently with basic constitutional principles.
- *Following public issues in the media*, using a variety of sources, such as television, radio, newspapers, journals, and magazines.
- *Researching public issues*, using computer resources, libraries, the telephone, personal contacts, the media.
- *Gathering and analyzing information* from government officials and agencies, interest groups, civic organizations.
- *Attending public meetings and hearings*, e.g., student council, city council and school board meetings, briefings by members of county boards of supervisors, state legislatures, and Congress.
- *Interviewing* people knowledgeable about civic issues, such as local officials, civil servants, experts in public and private associations, members of college and university faculties.
- *Using electronic resources* for acquiring and exchanging information, e.g., the Internet, online university services, electronic bulletin boards.

Influencing

- *Voting*, e.g., in class, student body, local, state, national, and special elections.
- *Informing*, e.g., furnishing factual data to legislators and policymakers.

- *Petitioning*, e.g., calling attention of representative bodies and public officials to grievances and desired changes in public policy, gathering signatures for initiatives or recall.
- *Writing*, e.g., letters and "op ed" pieces, broadsides, pamphlets.
- *Speaking and testifying before public bodies*, e.g., student body councils, school boards, special districts, state legislatures, Congress.
- *Supporting or opposing candidates or positions on public issues*, e.g., contributing time, talent, or money.
- *Participating in civic and political groups*, e.g., student government, youth groups, local, state, and national political parties, and ad-hoc advocacy groups.
- *Employing the various media to advance points of view on public affairs*, e.g., participating in online discussions of public issues, writing newspaper and magazine articles, voicing one's opinion on radio and television talk shows.

Civic Dispositions

The third component of this Framework, civic dispositions, refers to the traits of private and public character essential to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy. The importance of these civic dispositions can scarcely be overstated. In worrying that the Bill of Rights might be just a "parchment barrier," James Madison wrote that its principles must "acquire by degrees the character of fundamental maxims of free Governments." As Judge Learned Hand put it in our own century, "I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it."

Civic dispositions develop slowly over time as a result of what one learns and experiences in the home, school, community, and organizations of civil society. From those experiences should come the understanding that American constitutional democracy requires the responsible self-governance of each individual; one cannot exist without the other. Traits of private character such as moral responsibility, self-discipline, and respect for individual worth and human dignity are

essential to the well-being of the American nation, society, and constitutional democracy.

Moreover, American constitutional democracy cannot accomplish its purposes, unless its citizens are inclined to participate thoughtfully in public affairs and civic life. Traits of public character, such as public spiritedness, civility, respect for law, critical mindedness, and a willingness to listen, negotiate, and compromise are indispensable for the nation's well-being.

Civic dispositions that contribute to the political efficacy of the individual, the healthy functioning of the political system, a sense of dignity and worth, and the common good include:

- *Becoming an independent member of society*, e.g., adhering voluntarily to self-imposed standards of behavior rather than requiring the imposition of external controls, accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, fulfilling the moral and legal obligations of membership in society.
- *Assuming the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen*, e.g., taking care of one's self, supporting one's family and caring for, nurturing, and educating one's children, being informed about public issues, serving on juries, voting, paying taxes, performing public service.
- *Respecting individual worth and human dignity*, e.g., treating everyone with respect, listening to the opinions of others, behaving in a civil manner, considering the rights and interests of others, adhering to the principle of majority rule, respecting the right of the minority to dissent.
- *Participating in civic affairs in an informed, thoughtful, and effective manner*, e.g., becoming informed prior to voting or participating in public debate, engaging in civic discourse, assuming leadership when appropriate, evaluating whether and when one's obligation as a citizen requires that one's personal desires and interests be subordinated to the public good, and evaluating whether and when moral obligations or constitutional principles require one to reject certain civic expectations.
- *Promoting the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy*, e.g., being informed and attentive to public issues, learning about and deliberating on the meaning of constitutional principles, monitoring the adherence of political leaders

and governmental agencies to constitutional principles and taking appropriate action if that adherence is lacking, working through peaceful, legal means to change laws that are thought to be unwise or unjust.

Context

Context refers to the arenas in which civic knowledge is acquired, civic skills are employed, and civic dispositions are developed. Contexts in which students learn about civics include the home, school, community, state, nation, and world. These contexts should be taken into account in any assessment of civic knowledge. Learning and applying civic knowledge and skills begins in the home and with early social interaction among friends, relatives, and members of the community. This learning process continues in school as children interact with peers, teachers, school staff members, and administrators to learn about rules, accepted behaviors, and basic democratic and constitutional principles and values. All of these contexts provide a venue in which students can learn about the formal and informal processes of government and civil society.

In the course of their civic education, students should learn that in our federal system, authority and responsibility are divided and shared among local, state, and national governments. Students also should become conversant with systems of governance in other nations as well as with the impact of world affairs on their own lives, communities, and nation.

The American political system provides citizens with numerous opportunities for choice and participation. The formal institutions and processes of government such as political parties, campaigns, and elections are important avenues for civic action. Yet equally important avenues are the many associations and groups that constitute civil society, ranging from school clubs to community-based groups to national and international nongovernmental organizations.

The contexts in which students learn about civic life may vary across grade levels. For example, students in the early grades may learn relatively more about civic life, politics, and government from the home and school contexts, while 12th graders may learn relatively more about other nations' political systems and world affairs, because they are more aware of the international context. Similarly, students in the early grades may learn about the informal processes of

government by working in small-group situations, while 12th graders may become participants in the more formal institutions of government.

Although the home, school, community, and state may receive greater emphasis, national and international contexts should be included. Political socialization studies have confirmed repeatedly that young children are more likely to know a national leader than leaders in their state or community. In the United States, most young children are aware that a president is the nation's elected leader and that symbols such as the flag represent their nation. Young children also are aware of major national and international events, thanks to the ubiquitousness of television. In grades 8 and 12, the content should include a broader understanding of the state and nation, as well as of international affairs. At all levels, a balance should be sought between instances involving formal governmental structure and functions and the less formal manifestations of the organizations and relationships, such as voluntary organizations and the family, which constitute civil society.

Home, school, community, state, nation, and world—these are arenas in which students put their knowledge and skills into practice. In the process of utilizing their knowledge and skills in these arenas, students not only learn how to monitor and influence public policy; they also deepen their understanding and learn how to interact and participate in a more informed, effective, and responsible manner.

These are the major dimensions of the proposed assessment on civics: content knowledge, intellectual skills applied to that knowledge, participatory skills, dispositions, and the context in which understanding of civics is learned and used.

Chapter Four: Desired Attributes of the Assessment

The design of an assessment consists of three main components—the content to be assessed, the processes or methods by which that content is assessed, and the levels of achievement or performance expectations reflected in the assessment. The content for the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment was described in the preceding chapter; the content consists of subject matter organized by overarching questions, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions, all occurring in a variety of contexts or situations. This chapter addresses the methods and expectations of the assessment, the kinds of questions and activities to be used, student response formats and scoring, and preliminary definitions of the NAEP achievement levels. This chapter also addresses the relative weighting or emphasis among the parts of the assessment.

Emphasis for Each Component

The following sections provide recommendations concerning the grade-level distribution of the assessment exercises across the three Framework components—knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions. The distributions of test exercises will be described in terms of "proportion of the exercise pool." However, such proportions are not intended to denote simple percentages of exercises in a given grade or dimension. Simple proportions of exercises are problematic, because test questions vary widely in the amount of time they require of students and the amount of information the answers to them yield. Therefore, in this Framework document, specifications of "proportion of the exercise pool" correspond to the total student time at a particular grade level that would be required if the entire grade-level pool of exercises could be administered to a single student. In the NAEP design, each student actually takes only a small portion of the entire grade-level exercise pool. This design feature reduces the burden on individual students while providing for broad content coverage on the civics assessment.

Each question on the assessment will measure both knowledge and an intellectual skill. In addition, test exercises may measure students' understanding of the importance of participatory skills or

civic dispositions in a constitutional democracy. Some questions may be written in terms of the various contexts in which students apply their knowledge and demonstrate their skills. The following sections describe the percentage distributions for knowledge and intellectual skills for each grade level. General recommendations are provided for allocation of testing time for the participatory skills and civic dispositions.

The Content Dimension—Civic Knowledge

Table 4.1—Distribution of Exercise Pool Across Areas of Civic Knowledge*

Questions	Grade		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 12
I. What are civic life, politics, government?	25%	15%	10%
II. What are the foundations of the American political system?	20%	25%	20%
III. How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?	15%	25%	25%
IV. What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?	10%	15%	20%
V. What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?	30%	20%	25%

*Note: (1) All test questions will measure both knowledge and an intellectual skill.
(2) See chapter three for a description of the content.

Intellectual Skills

This assessment encompasses a broad range of intellectual skills. These include identifying and describing; explaining and analyzing; and evaluating, taking, and defending a position. Research shows that intellectual skills are inseparable from knowledge. Each test

exercise in the NAEP Civics Assessment, therefore, will tap an aspect of knowledge as well as an intellectual skill. This strong relationship between content and intellectual skills results in a wide array of assessment tasks. For example, a student may be asked to evaluate a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as to explain criteria used by the Court as the basis of its opinion.

The distribution of exercises across intellectual skills should be as shown in table 4.2

Table 4.2—Distribution of Exercise Pool Across Intellectual Skills*

Grade	Intellectual Skills		
	Identifying and Describing	Explaining and Analyzing	Evaluating, Taking, and Defending a Position
Grade 4	40%	30%	30%
Grade 8	35%	35%	30%
Grade 12	25%	40%	35%

*Note: All test questions will measure both knowledge and an intellectual skill.

Participatory Skills

A comprehensive assessment of civic education must address not only the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual skills, but also must measure, to the extent possible, students' participatory skills. As defined in chapter three, these broad categories of participatory skills include interacting, monitoring, and influencing. Test exercises will be developed to measure how well students understand the appropriate use of these participatory skills. Direct measurement of participatory skills, such as participating in school governance or attending a public meeting, is beyond the scope of this assessment. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of the tasks in the civics assessment exercise pool should relate to students' knowledge and understanding of participatory skills.

Civic Dispositions

Civic dispositions are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy. As described in

chapter three, these civic dispositions—or traits of public and private character—are essential to the vitality of constitutional democracy and American civil society. Subject to the assessment limitations noted above regarding participatory skills, test exercises pertaining to civic dispositions will focus on students' knowledge and explanation of the importance of those dispositions. The assessment will not include questions related to students' personal values or dispositions.

In developing the civics assessment exercise pool, approximately 10 to 15 percent of the testing time at each grade level will be devoted to questions related to civic dispositions, in conjunction with knowledge and intellectual skills. For example, students may be asked to describe the importance of listening respectfully to the opinions of others. Alternatively, a question may measure students' ability to monitor the adherence of political leaders and governmental agencies to constitutional principles.

Context

The acquisition of knowledge and skills and the development of civic dispositions occur in a variety of contexts—home, school, community, state, nation, and the world. As noted in chapter three, these contexts also constitute the primary arenas in which citizens put their civic knowledge and skills into practice.

Although the home, school, community, and state may be given more emphasis at grade 4, research indicates that younger children also are aware of major national and international events and leaders. For example, they are more likely to know who is President of the United States than to know who is governor of their state or mayor of their town. In grades 8 and 12, the context should include a broader understanding of local, state, and national, as well as of international affairs.

At all levels, a balance should be sought between instances involving formal governmental structure and functions and the less formal manifestations of the organizations and relationships which constitute civil society.

Exercise Formats

The scope of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and context outlined in the Civics Framework represents a rich source of material for developing test exercises. Based on a careful examination of *what* students

in grades 4, 8, and 12 should know and be able to do in civics, a set of recommendations has been developed on *how to measure* the content and skills on the NAEP Civics Assessment. These recommendations are guided by consideration of student testing time, current assessment methods, the amount and level of reading expected of students, ways to construct engaging test questions, and other factors.

Multiple-choice questions should be developed to address the full range of knowledge and skill areas outlined in this Framework document. Both stand-alone multiple-choice questions and a series of questions related to stimulus selections are acceptable. The stand-alone multiple-choice question format may consist of a short phrase or sentence followed by four response options. In addition, stand-alone multiple-choice questions may require students to read a brief excerpt or quotation, interpret a chart, or evaluate the significance of a document. Other appropriate uses of multiple-choice items include a series of several test questions related to a particular stimulus selection, such as a political cartoon, table of election results, or other material.

Open-ended tasks should consist of short- and extended-response questions. Short-answer tasks may require students to provide a short descriptive phrase, several sentences, or other similar responses. Extended-response tasks may ask students to write a paragraph or two, develop a chart to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a certain course of action, or create similar indepth responses.

Based on the civic knowledge and skills to be measured, the assessment should consist of 60 percent multiple-choice questions, 30 percent short-answer questions, and 10 percent extended-response questions at each grade level. These figures are presented in terms of the percentage of assessment time students would spend on these question types.

Percentage of Student Assessment Time

Multiple-choice questions	60%
Short-answer questions	30%
Extended-response questions	10%

Additional detail regarding appropriate grade-level considerations for question types appears in the document entitled *Civics Assessment and Exercise Specifications*.

Stimulus Materials

The area of civics provides an exciting array of materials upon which to base the assessment tasks. Where possible, a wide variety of authentic stimulus materials should be used that are appropriate for students in grades 4, 8, and 12. In addition, careful consideration should be given to the amount and level of reading material presented in the test questions.

Text-based stimulus materials may include excerpts from core civic documents, quotations, excerpts from speeches or landmark cases of the U.S. Supreme Court, newspaper articles, hypothetical cases, and many other sources. Students may be asked questions about documents such as a sample ballot, lyrics of a song, or a proposed rule or law. Not all stimulus material needs to be printed in the test booklet.

To represent the dynamic, engaging nature of civics, the assessment should include test questions related to non-text-based stimulus material. As with the written stimuli, these graphic or pictorial materials may be printed in the test booklet or be included as separate hands-on information for students. The list of possible stimulus materials of this type includes photographs, political cartoons, maps, timelines, tables and graphs, campaign literature, art work related to civic events and significant individuals, and a wide variety of other sources. Some extended-response questions may require students to consider several related stimulus materials, combining both text and nontext formats. For example, students may be asked to take a position regarding a community planning issue after examining a map and reading about the proposed change.

Scoring Student Responses

Recommendations for scoring student responses to open-ended questions are consistent with current practices in NAEP. Scoring rubrics for short-answer exercises have specific criteria provided for responses at each score level. Extended open-ended exercises should be scored to obtain more indepth information from these longer, more complex student responses.

Scoring rubrics should be created for open-ended exercises as the exercises are being developed. After the civics items have been field tested, the scoring rubrics should be revised based on actual student responses. Scoring rubrics must adhere to the requirements

for knowledge and skills as defined in the civics assessment content outline for each grade level. There must be a close affinity between the demands of the test questions and the criteria of the scoring rubric. That is, test exercises must be designed so that the components to be scored are quite evident. Requirements of each test question should communicate clearly to students what is being asked and how their responses will be evaluated. Criteria should be distinctly defined so that raters will understand clearly how to evaluate the student responses. Finally, each score point in the rubric should be sufficiently differentiated to allow raters to apply the various points on the scale consistently. More detailed requirements for developing and applying scoring rubrics for the civics assessment are contained in the *Civics Assessment and Exercise Specifications* document.

Preliminary Achievement Level Descriptions

Achievement levels describe how well students should perform on the knowledge and skills measured by the assessment. The levels define appropriate expectations of student performance in civics at grades 4, 8, and 12 as measured by NAEP. Three achievement levels—**Basic**, **Proficient**, and **Advanced**—have been established by the National Assessment Governing Board for each grade level and each assessment area.

Basic denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work in grades 4, 8, and 12. **Proficient** represents solid academic performance and competency over challenging subject matter. **Advanced** achievement on this assessment signifies superior performance. In civics, students at the advanced level should demonstrate the ability to think critically about civics issues and to integrate knowledge and skills in problem-solving situations.

The following achievement level descriptions for each grade are cumulative in nature; each incorporates the expectations listed in the preceding levels. Thus, students at the proficient level should be able to do what is expected of students at the basic level and more, while students at the advanced level should be able to do what is expected at the proficient level and more.

Grade 4

Students at the 4th-grade level are not expected to have extended or indepth knowledge of civics and government. They should, however, be able to demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described in this Framework.

Fourth-grade students at the **Basic** level should be able to:

- Explain what government is and describe what governments do.
- Explain the purposes of rules and laws in the school and the community.
- Recognize the difference between power and authority.
- Explain that Americans are united by commonly held values, principles, and beliefs.
- Describe the many forms of diversity in American society.
- Identify peaceful means for managing conflict.
- Describe important services that local, state, and national governments provide.
- Recognize the U.S. Constitution as the basis for American government.
- Explain that the world is divided into many nations.
- Explain how and why laws can provide order, predictability, and security.
- Explain the importance of limited government.
- Define what a citizen is.
- Distinguish between rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- Identify ways students can participate in the governance of their school and community.
- Identify the qualities of a good leader, choose a classroom or school leaders, and defend their choice.
- Explain which level of government they should contact to express their opinions or to get help with specific problems.

Fourth-grade students at the **Proficient** level should be able to:

- Explain the importance of government in the classroom, school, community, state, and nation.
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of a school rule or a law.
- Explain how the rule of law protects individual rights and the common good.
- Explain how politics helps people make decisions about the ways they live together.
- Explain ways groups in schools and communities can manage conflict peacefully.
- Explain what the national government is and what it does.
- Explain how holidays and symbols (e.g. flag, Statue of Liberty) reflect common American values.
- Evaluate, take, and defend a position on why it is important for people to participate in civic life.
- Identify heads of the executive branches of their local, state, and national governments.
- Describe ways in which nations interact with one another and try to resolve problems.
- Explain that students are citizens of their classroom, community, state, and nation.
- Describe rights and responsibilities of a citizen.

Fourth-grade students at the **Advanced** level should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions on the purposes government should serve.
- Explain sources of authority.
- Describe how government makes it possible for people to work together to accomplish goals they could not achieve alone.

- Identify the costs and benefits of unity and diversity.
- Explain why it is important that citizens hold in common the values and principles expressed in the nation's core documents.
- Explain ways in which citizens can monitor their governments and why it is important for them to do so.
- Explain how nations benefit when they resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Evaluate, take, and defend a position on why fulfilling one's civic responsibilities is important.
- Evaluate, take, and defend a position on an issue involving a conflict between individual rights and the common good.
- Explain the major difference between limited and unlimited government.

Grade 8

Eighth-grade students at the **Basic** level should be able to:

- Distinguish between a subject and a citizen.
- Explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.
- Identify and describe the essential characteristics of government, politics, the rule of law, and constitutions.
- Evaluate competing ideas about the purposes of government.
- Describe the major characteristics of systems of shared powers and of parliamentary systems.
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of confederal, federal, and unitary systems of government.
- Identify and describe fundamental principles and values in core American documents of the founding era such as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights and other amendments.
- Explain which level of government they should contact to express their opinions or to get help with specific problems.
- Explain the costs and benefits of unity and diversity using contemporary and historical examples.

- Explain the function of elections, political parties, and interest groups in a democratic society.
- Identify major principles of American constitutional government, such as federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, government by consent of the governed, and individual rights.
- Explain why it is important that citizens hold in common the values and principles expressed in the nation's core documents.
- Identify major governmental and nongovernmental international organizations and their functions.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance of certain dispositions or traits of character for enhancing citizenship.
- Explain how the political process provides opportunities for citizens to influence government.
- Identify the personal, political, and economic rights and responsibilities of citizens and explain their importance.
- Describe how the world is divided into nation-states.

Eighth-grade students at the **Proficient** level should be able to:

- Describe and explain the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited government and representative democracy.
- Distinguish between government and civil society.
- Explain how and why powers are divided and shared between the national and state governments.
- Identify discrepancies between the ideals expressed in the nation's core documents and reality and ways in which those discrepancies have been addressed in the past.
- Explain how our constitutional democracy can be improved today by individual and collective participation.
- Identify, describe, and explain fundamental ideas in the nation's core documents of the founding era and core documents of subsequent periods in U.S. history.
- Explain how and why legislative, executive, and judicial powers are distributed, shared, and limited.

- Identify and explain the significance of historical experience and of geographical, social, and economic factors that have helped to shape American society.
- Explain the importance for themselves, their communities, and the nation of the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy.
- Make informed judgments about what government should do and should not do.
- Explain the importance of the rule of law.
- Explain how and why the U.S. Constitution establishes and limits the powers of government.
- Explain the conditions under which constitutional government flourishes.
- Explain how the United States has influenced other nations and how other nations have influenced the American political process and society.
- Explain the effects of significant political, demographic, and environmental developments and trends in the world.
- Explain how citizens can interact with one another and how they can monitor and influence their government.

Eighth-grade students at the **Advanced** level should be able to:

- Compare, contrast, and evaluate alternative ways of organizing constitutional governments.
- Identify, explain, and evaluate historical and contemporary efforts to narrow discrepancies between American ideals and realities.
- Explain why civil society is important to the maintenance of limited government.
- Evaluate ways conflicts can be resolved in a peaceful manner that respects individual rights and promotes the common good.
- Explain how law is used to achieve the purposes of American constitutional government, such as maintaining order and protecting the rights of individuals.

- Explain how U.S. foreign policy is made and the means by which it is carried out.
- Explain reasons for and consequences of the breakdown of order among nation-states.
- Explain the relationship between participation in civic life and the attainment of personal and public goals.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues in which fundamental values and principles are in conflict, such as liberty and equality, individual rights and the common good, and majority rule and minority rights.
- Explain how citizens can monitor and influence local, state, and national government.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions regarding traits of public and private character which promote the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy.

Grade 12

Twelfth-grade students at the **Basic** level should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the criteria used for naturalization.
- Identify the essential characteristics of civic life and nation-state.
- Explain and evaluate the place of law in American society.
- Explain and evaluate civil society as a prerequisite of limited government.
- Describe the fundamental ideas of American constitutional government and explain their importance.
- Evaluate sources of information related to public policy issues.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues relating to public policy.
- Identify the principal foreign policy positions of the United States and describe their significance.

- Describe the purposes and functions of major governmental and nongovernmental international organizations.
- Explain the reasons for and the consequences of the breakdown of order among nation-states, including consequences that are important in the students' own lives.
- Explain why civic dispositions that incline citizens to public affairs are important in a constitutional democracy.
- Describe the many ways in which citizens can interact, monitor, and influence public policy and why it is important for them to do so.

Twelfth-grade students at the **Proficient** level should be able to:

- Evaluate the place of law in American society as it relates to the protection of individual rights and the promotion of the common good.
- Explain the value of constitutions both as devices for preserving core values and principles and as vehicles for change or for resolving social issues.
- Describe the character of American political conflict and explain factors that usually tend to prevent it or lower its intensity.
- Evaluate the purposes and performance of major international organizations.
- Evaluate the roles played by political parties and elections in a democracy.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues relating to public policy in which fundamental values and principles are in conflict.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions on foreign policy issues in light of American national interests, values, and principles.
- Evaluate ways and means that citizens can monitor and influence local, state, and national governments.

Twelfth-grade students at the **Advanced** level should be able to:

- Describe the characteristics and predict the probable consequences of alternative electoral and political systems.
- Describe the major characteristics of parliamentary systems and systems based on shared powers.
- Compare the advantages and disadvantages of confederal, federal, and unitary systems of government.
- Assess the costs and benefits of alternative forms of constitutional democracy.
- Describe how domestic and foreign policies are made and carried out.
- Compare the distinctive characteristics of American society and its political culture with that of other countries.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions on current foreign policy issues in light of American national interests, values, and principles.
- Explain how citizens interact and monitor public policy and how they can work individually and collectively to influence public policy.
- Evaluate historical and contemporary political communication using such criteria as logical validity, factual accuracy, and emotional appeal.
- Identify, explain, and evaluate historical and contemporary efforts to narrow the gap between American ideals and reality through individual, social, and political action.
- Evaluate, take, and defend positions about the functions of political leadership and the importance of public service in American democracy.
- Explain and evaluate ethical dilemmas that might confront political leaders.

Recommendations for a Special Trend Study

Although the new Framework for the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment differs substantially from the one used in 1988, the Steering and Planning Committees strongly recommend that the 1998 assessment include a special trend study. Given the 10-year lapse in

assessing civics, the project committees agreed that a small-scale, cost-effective trend study would provide invaluable information on students' knowledge of civics to policymakers, educators, and the general public.

An effective design for assessing change in student performance between 1988 and 1998 would involve administering to a subsample of students in each grade, one or two intact blocks (15-minute sets) of items from the 1988 NAEP Civics Assessment. This design would permit analyses of the percentage of items students answered correctly in 1988 compared to 10 years later. This design also would yield comparative information on particular questions or items of special interest to civic educators and policymakers. For example, one could examine whether students knew more or less about some aspect of the U.S. Constitution, based upon item-specific results. Results of this limited trend study must be reported with care and accompanied by appropriate caveats. Careful reporting and interpretation should discourage generalizations beyond the intended scope of the study. Further details regarding the design, analyses, reporting, and other features of the trend study will be addressed by the National Assessment Governing Board, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the NAEP grantee, Educational Testing Service.

Conclusion

The design of the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment Framework, while maintaining some conceptual continuity with the 1988 NAEP Civics Assessment, takes account of current reforms in civic education. It is also consistent with the *National Standards for Civics and Government* and with the design of the proposed international civics assessment planned for 1998 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Students who master the materials outlined within this document will have a greater sense of the productive and creative roles they can play as citizens of the United States in the 21st century.

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Appendix A

1998 NAEP Civics Assessment Planning Process

A Note About Terminology

1998 NAEP Civics Assessment Planning Process

Planning for the 1998 NAEP Civics Assessment began in February 1995. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), under contract to the National Assessment Governing Board, conducted the project to develop the Framework and specifications for the 1998 Civics Assessment. The consensus process, the means by which agreement about the topics and mode of assessment was derived, involved hundreds of individuals and groups from across the country, including curriculum and assessment specialists, classroom teachers, high school students, university professors, representatives of business and industry, policymakers, and members of the general public knowledgeable about civic education. Members of the formal committees involved in the consensus process widened the scope of their review and planning by making use of state and local curriculum guides, textbooks, curriculum frameworks, tests, and current research. The NAEP Framework is not a national curriculum; instead it is a broadly accepted outline of the civic knowledge and skills the 1998 assessment should measure by testing a representative sample of American school students.

The major part of the consensus process was accomplished through the joint efforts of a Steering Committee and a Planning Committee, whose members are listed in appendix C of this document. Two subcontractors, the Center for Civic Education (CCE) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR), aided the project. CCE was the developer of the *National Standards for Civics and Government*, and its representatives provided important information and assistance on issues related to civic education and assessment. Representatives of AIR provided technical assistance and prepared the test specifications document that will guide development of the assessment.

A paper entitled *Issues Concerning a National Assessment of Civics* was prepared for the purpose of raising and discussing relevant concerns regarding the development of a national assessment in civics. This paper was reviewed by more than 200 people, and their responses informed the discussions of the Steering and Planning Committees. Several key issues raised by the paper concerned the identification of knowledge and skills to be assessed,

how both would be assessed, and the formal and informal contextual factors that influence civic proficiency.

The Steering Committee guided the overall efforts. Its members represented business, industry, government, private and public education, professional and civic organizations, universities, the policy-making community, and other groups interested in civics. It met separately and in joint meetings with the Planning Committee to act in an advisory capacity and to set overall guidelines for the project. Those guidelines included the following:

- In planning for the 1998 assessment the following documents should be considered: *1988 NAEP Civics: United States Government and Politics Objectives*, the *National Standards for Civics and Government*, prepared by the Center for Civic Education, the *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, prepared by the National Council for the Social Studies, and existing state and local frameworks for civic education.
- The 1998 Civics Assessment should consider how civic knowledge and skills are addressed in other subject areas.
- The assessment should make a limited effort to evaluate non-school influences upon civic knowledge and skills.
- It is appropriate that the assessment address the academic preparation, teaching strategies, and attitudes toward teaching civics of those teachers responsible for civic education.
- Principles embodied in the nation's core documents should be assessed, not students' personal values and dispositions.
- The assessment should be sensitive to the fact that implementation of national, state, and district standards may be at different stages of development. Therefore, reporting of the 1998 civics results should acknowledge the fact that the assessment sought to reflect a balance between recommended and current instructional practice.
- The assessment should take into account the effect of rapid technological developments upon students and their schools. It also should assess the degree to which new technologies may influence civic knowledge and skills.

The Planning Committee, which generated the specific recommendations, was composed of assessment specialists; researchers; state and district social studies supervisors; technology specialists;

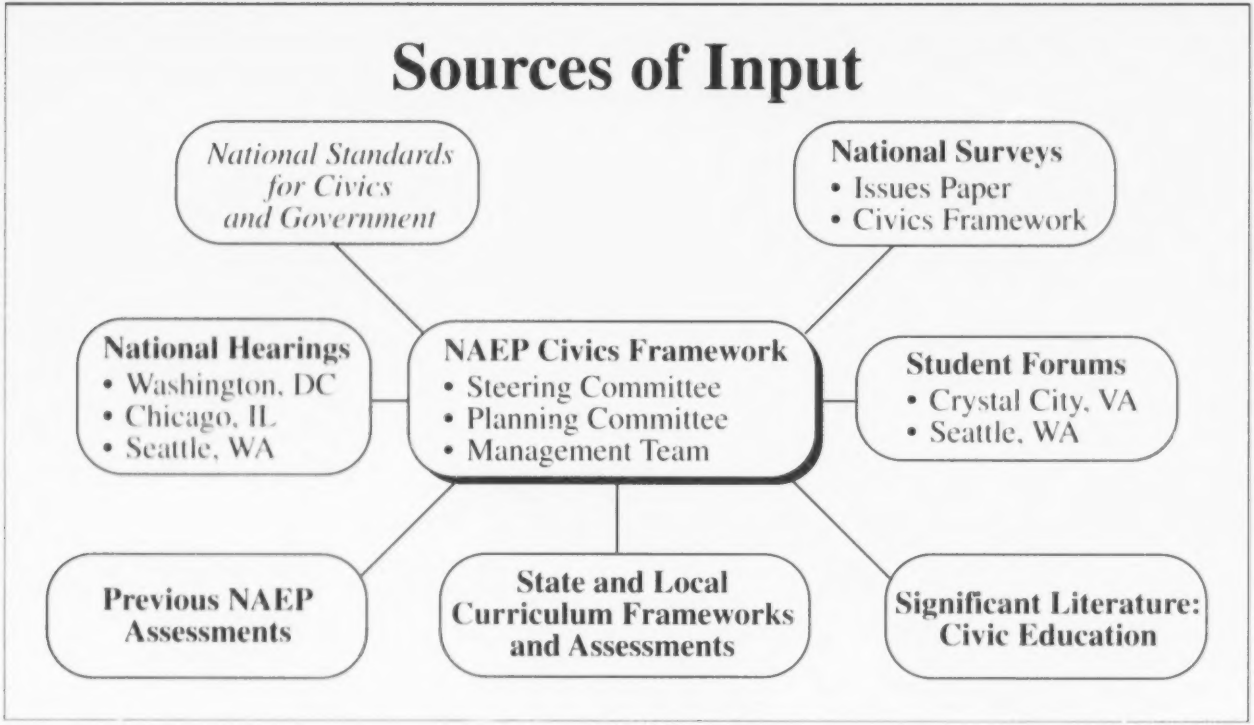
skilled teachers in elementary, middle, and high school; university faculty members; and leaders of civic and professional organizations. This committee drafted the Assessment Framework and identified the goals and objectives of the assessment based upon the *Issues Paper* and Steering Committee guidelines. In addition, they supported the following activities of the project.

- To identify current practices in civic education, all states were asked to provide copies of curriculum guidelines, frameworks, and assessment documents germane to the teaching of civics and government. These documents were analyzed by committee members in comparison with the *National Standards for Civics and Government*.
- In October and November 1995, public hearings were conducted in Washington, D.C.; Chicago, Illinois; and Seattle, Washington, to provide an opportunity for interested members of the public to offer recommendations. Two student forums, in which 65 high school students participated, also were conducted. Reports of the hearings and the student forums are available from CCSSO.
- More than 60 people reviewed drafts of the Framework document and submitted written evaluations between October and December 1995. Reviewers included college and university professors of political science, social studies education, and educational research, as well as representatives of professional organizations, leaders of business, parent and civic groups, state-level supervisors of social studies, and classroom teachers.

During the planning process, NAGB provided support and guidance through its staff and Subject Area Committee #1. The Board unanimously approved the civics assessment recommendations on March 2, 1996.

This Framework document is supplemented by three other technical documents, *Civics Assessment and Exercise Specifications*, *Recommendations for Background Questions*, and *Reporting Recommendations*, which provide additional recommendations and criteria by which the assessment will be developed and the standards by which civic knowledge and skills will be assessed. The following graphic highlights the "Sources of Input," which had a major impact on the development of the NAEP Civics Framework.

Sources of Input



A Note About Terminology

As used in this document, the term "Assessment Framework" means the content and overall design that have been developed in the consensus building process to guide the preparation of the 1998 Civics Assessment. The term "Framework document" means this document—the text in which the Framework, as created in the consensus building process, is contained. The term "standards" refers to criteria that should guide civic education in the schools and by which assessments of students' achievement could be made.

In the 1998 Assessment Framework, the term "citizen" will be used in a broad, encompassing sense. For example students are citizens of their classroom and their school. They also are citizens of their neighborhood and community. The term citizenship also is used more precisely where it is appropriate to do so, to refer to natural-born and naturalized "citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside."

The term "Americans" also is used throughout this Framework. While it is true that others in the Western Hemisphere also consider themselves to be "Americans," that name generally is recognized as designating the people of the United States of America.

Appendix B

Organizing Questions and Content Summary

Intellectual Skills

Participatory Skills

Civic Dispositions

NAEP Civics Assessment
Organizing Questions and Content Summary For: Part I

I. What Are Civic Life, Politics, and Government?		
Grade 4	**Grade 8**	**Grade 12**
Definition of government Difference between power, authority Necessity, purposes of government: • Make, carry out, enforce laws. • Manage conflicts. • Provide for the defense of the nation. Importance of rules, laws: • Purposes of rules, laws. • Evaluating rules, laws. Major difference between limited government, unlimited government	Definition of civic life, politics, government, civil society Difference between power, authority Necessity, purposes of politics, government Limited, unlimited governments The rule of law Purposes, uses of constitutions Conditions under which constitutional government flourishes Alternative ways of organizing constitutional governments: • Shared powers, parliamentary systems. • Confederal, federal, unitary systems.	Definition of civic life, politics, constitutional government, civil society Difference between power, authority Necessity, purposes of politics, government Limited, unlimited governments The rule of law Civil society, limited government Relationship of limited government to political, economic freedom Purposes, uses of constitutions Conditions under which constitutional government flourishes Alternative ways of organizing constitutional governments: • Shared powers, parliamentary systems. • Confederal, federal, unitary systems. Obligations of representatives in constitutional governments

NAEP Civics Assessment
Organizing Questions and Content Summary For: Part II

II. What Are the Foundations of the American Political System?		
Grade 4	**Grade 8**	**Grade 12**
Fundamental values, principles Distinctive characteristics of American society Unity, diversity in American society: • Ideals of American democracy. • American identity. • Costs, benefits of unity, diversity. Prevention and management of conflicts	American idea of constitutional government Distinctive characteristics of American society Role of voluntarism in American life Unity, diversity in American society Character of American political conflict Fundamental values, principles of American constitutional democracy Conflicts among values, principles in American political, social life Disparities between ideals, reality in American political, social life	American idea of constitutional government Distinctive characteristics of American society Role of voluntarism in American life Role of organized groups in political life Unity, diversity in American society Character of American political conflict Influence of classical liberalism, republicanism on American constitutional democracy Fundamental values, principles of American constitutional democracy Conflicts among values, principles in American political, social life Disparities between ideals, reality in American political, social life

NAEP Civics Assessment
Organizing Questions and Content Summary For: Part III

III. How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embody the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy?		
Grade 4	**Grade 8**	**Grade 12**
Meaning, importance of the U.S. Constitution Major responsibilities, services of state governments Major responsibilities, services of local governments Key leaders in local, state, national governments Contacting public officials, agencies	Distributing, sharing, limiting powers of the national government Major responsibilities of national government for domestic, foreign policy The federal system Organization, major responsibilities of state, local governments Financing government through taxation Law in American society Political communication Political parties, interest groups, campaigns Voting, elections Civil society: nongovernmental associations, groups Forming, carrying out public policy Leaders in local, state, national governments: how to monitor, influence them	Distributing governmental power, preventing its abuse Major responsibilities of the national government: Constitutional status, major responsibilities of state, local governments Financing government through taxation Law in American society, protection of individual rights The public agenda Political communication: television, radio, press, political persuasion Political parties, interest groups, campaigns, elections Public opinion, behavior of the electorate Civil society: nongovernmental associations, groups Forming, carrying out public policy Leaders in local, state, national governments: how to monitor, influence them

NAEP Civics Assessment
Organizing Questions and Content Summary For: Part IV

IV. What Is the Relationship of the United States to Other Nations and to World Affairs?		
Grade 4	**Grade 8**	**Grade 12**
The concept of nation Interaction among nations: • Trade, • Diplomacy, • Cultural context, • Treaties and agreements, • Military force. Importance of peaceful resolution of international conflicts	Nation-states Interaction among nation-states U.S. relations with other nation-states Major governmental, nongovernmental international organizations Impact of the American concept of democracy, individual rights on the world The influence of other nations on American politics, society Effects of significant world political, demographic, environmental developments, and trends on the United States	Nation-states Interaction among nation-states The breakdown of order among nation-states Making, implementing U.S. foreign policy Ends and means of U.S. foreign policy Major foreign policy positions of the United States The influence of other nations on American politics, society Impact of the American concept of democracy, individual rights on the world Effects of significant world political, demographic, environmental developments, trends on the United States United States, major governmental and nongovernmental international organizations

NAEP Civics Assessment
Organizing Questions and Content Summary For: Part V

V. What Are the Roles of Citizens in American Democracy?		
Grade 4	**Grade 8**	**Grade 12**
Meaning of citizenship; becoming a citizen Important rights of citizens Personal, civic responsibilities Civic dispositions that foster: • Individual independence. • Respect for human dignity. • Assumption of personal, political, economic responsibilities. • Participation in civic affairs. • Healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy. Opportunities for civic participation: • Discussing public issues. • Communicating with public officials and agencies. • Voting. • Attending meetings of governing bodies. Criteria for selecting leaders Importance of political leadership, public service	Difference between a subject and a citizen Meaning of citizenship; becoming a citizen Personal, political, economic rights Scope, limits of rights Personal, civic responsibilities Civic dispositions that foster: • Individual independence. • Respect for human dignity. • Assumption of personal, political, economic responsibilities. • Participation in civic affairs. • Healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy. Opportunities for civic participation Criteria for selecting leaders Importance of political leadership, public service	Meaning of citizenship; becoming a citizen Personal, political, economic rights Relationships among personal, political, economic rights Scope, limits of rights Personal, civic responsibilities Relationship between politics and the attainment of individual and public goals Difference between political and social participation Civic dispositions that foster: • Individual independence. • Respect for human dignity. • Assumption of personal, political, economic responsibilities. • Participation in civic affairs. • Healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy. Opportunities for civic participation Criteria for selecting leaders Importance of political leadership, public service

NAEP Civics Assessment: Intellectual Skills*

Identifying and Describing	Explaining and Analyzing	Evaluating, Taking, and Defending a Position
• Defining key terms. • Making distinctions. • Identifying individuals, symbols, institutions. • Identifying ideas, concepts. • Identifying emotional language, symbols. • Describing functions and processes. • Determining origins. • Describing attributes, characteristics. • Classifying by attributes. • Describing trends.	• Explaining how something works. • Explaining causes, effects of events, phenomena. • Comparing, contrasting. • Analyzing reasons for acts, occurrences, trends. • Distinguishing between fact and opinion. • Distinguishing between means and ends. • Clarifying meaning, relationships. • Clarifying responsibilities. • Interpreting the meaning or significance of events, ideas, phenomena.	• Identifying strengths, weaknesses. • Challenging *ad hominem* arguments. • Questioning the validity of arguments, data, analogies. • Citing evidence in support or rejection of ideas, positions. • Predicting probable consequences. • Critiquing means, ends. • Assessing costs, benefits of alternatives. • Choosing a position from existing alternatives. • Creating a novel position. • Defending a position. • Responding to opposing arguments.

*For further elaboration, see pages 24–28

NAEP Civics Assessment: Participatory Skills*

Interacting	Monitoring	Influencing
• Working in small groups, committees. • Listening. • Questioning to clarify information, points of view. • Discussing public affairs. • Participating in civic, interest groups. • Building coalitions, enlisting support of other like-minded groups. • Managing conflicts: mediating, negotiating, compromising, seeking consensus, adjudicating. • Performing school and community service, serving as a representative or elected leader. • Using print and electronic resources to acquire, exchange information.	• Discussing public affairs. • Tracking public issues in the media. • Researching public issues. • Gathering information from government officials and agencies, interest groups, civic organizations. • Attending public meetings and hearings. • Interviewing people knowledgeable about civic issues. • Questioning public officials, experts, others to elicit information, fix responsibility. • Using print and electronic resources to acquire, exchange information.	• Voting. • Representing one's own or a group's interests. • Petitioning. • Writing letters, op-ed pieces, broadsides, pamphlets. • Speaking, testifying before public bodies. • Participating in civic organizations, political parties, interest groups. • Supporting and opposing candidates or positions on public issues. • Using computer networks to advance points of view on public affairs.

*For further elaboration, see pages 28–31

NAEP Civics Assessment: Civic Dispositions*

Civic dispositions or traits of private and public character important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy:

- Becoming an independent member of society.
- Respecting individual worth and human dignity.
- Assuming the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen.
- Participating in civic affairs in an informed, thoughtful, and effective manner.
- Promoting the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy.

*Measured in terms of students understanding of their nature and importance. For further elaboration, see pages 31–33.

Appendix C

Steering Committee Members
Planning Committee Members
Management Team

Steering Committee Members

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Media Communications
The Disney Channel
Burbank, California

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Former Governor and Congressman
Minnetonka, Minnesota

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Lawyer
Charleston, West Virginia

James Shaver
Dean of Graduate Studies
Utah State University
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Sandy Baker
Middle School Teacher
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Frank Batavick
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Rita Geiger
Director of Social Studies and Foreign Languages
Norman Public Schools
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Carole Hahn
Professor
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Debbie Macon
Board Member
League of Women Voters
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Division for Public Education
American Bar Association
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Richard Niemi
Professor
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